

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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1. An apparatus for forming an image, in which hardware resources for use in the forming of the image are provided, and a program runs in respect of the forming of the image, said apparatus

10 comprising:

an image data converting unit which converts a format of image data; and

a format unifying unit which unifies a plurality of formats of image data by utilizing said

15 image data converting unit.

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2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said image data converting unit converts formats of image data used by a copier, a printer, a scanner, and a facsimile.

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3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1,
wherein said image data converting unit converts a
5 format of image data by resizing an image of the
image data, compressing the image data, decoding the
image data, and attending to multi-value conversion
of the image data.

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4. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1,
wherein said image data converting unit converts the
15 format of image data by hardware.

20 5. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1,
wherein said format unifying unit unifies the
plurality of formats of image data into one of the
plurality of formats.

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6. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1,
wherein said format unifying unit includes a
5 conversion executing unit which converts the image
data by utilizing said image data converting unit
according to a unified format.

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7. The apparatus as claimed in claim 6,
wherein said format unifying unit includes a
plurality of conversion executing units, one of
15 which is said conversion executing unit, and others
of which are identical to said conversion executing
unit.

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8. The apparatus as claimed in claim 7,
wherein said format unifying unit assigns the
plurality of conversion executing units to
25 respective images, thereby converting image data of

the images.

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9. The apparatus as claimed in claim 8,
wherein any given one of said conversion executing
units converts image data of a corresponding one of
the images by utilizing said image data converting
10 unit if a format of the image data of the
corresponding one of the images is different from
the unified format.

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10. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1,
further comprising a consolidated printing unit
which consolidates and prints images whose formats
20 are unified by said format unifying unit.

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11. The apparatus as claimed in claim 10,

wherein said format unifying unit notifies said consolidated printed unit that image data is ready for consolidated printing if said format unifying unit completes unification of the formats of image data after conversion of at least one of the formats or because of no need for conversion of at least one of the formats.

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12. A method for consolidated printing by an image forming apparatus, in which hardware resources for use in forming of an image are provided, and a program runs in respect of the forming of the image, said method comprising the steps of:

unifying a plurality of formats of image data by converting the formats of image data by hardware; and

consolidating and printing image data whose formats are unified.